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ABSTRACT

To investigate the role of the press in the agenda-setting process, a study examined the evolution of Harry Truman's policy on Palestine from November 29, 1947 through May 14, 1948--the 6-month period before Israel declared its nation-state status. Using a model which views the formation of public policy as a multidirectional process among the media, public, policy planners, and other elites, the study investigated forces which were influential in the debate on the efficacy of supporting the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. In this model, the factors influencing the debate included the media, public opinion, the Truman administration, and other governments interested in the Palestine question. Material examined for the study consisted of primary sources at the Harry S. Truman Library in Independence, Missouri, as well as oral interviews given by many of the reporters who covered the Truman administration and an analysis of "Foreign Relations of the United States" documents. Analysis indicated that while there was evidence to suggest that the press provided an important framework within which the public and private discourse on Palestine advanced, it was not the only framework. Other people and events operated far outside the ability of any single institution to control, supporting the multidirectional agenda-setting model. (Three figures are included, and 88 footnotes are appended.) (MM)

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TRUMAN, PALESTINE AND THE PRESS---

A Study in Agenda-Setting Dance Steps

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It has now been a quarter century since Cohen first claimed that while the press may not be able to tell its audience what to think, it is often successful in telling them what to think about.[1] In the past 15 years, Rogers and Dearing have identified 138 publications on the agenda-setting process.[2] Nearly two-thirds of the studies have analyzed how the public agenda is set; the other third on how the agenda of policy makers is established. The model that emerges from many of these investigations is one in which the media is seen as influencing the public agenda which in turn helps shape the policy agenda of decision makers and the implementation of that policy. (See Figure 1)

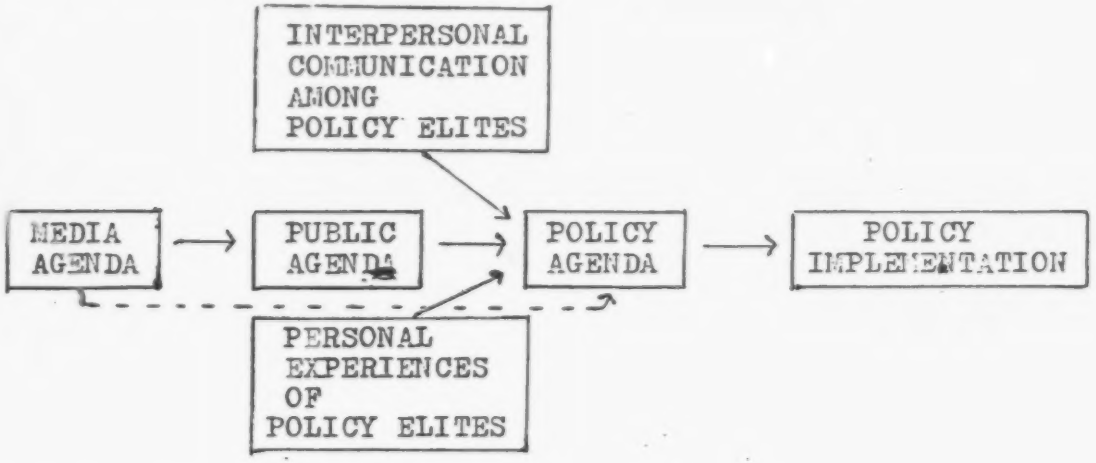

Figure 1. The Policy Agenda-Setting Process.

(Described in "Agenda-Setting Research: Where Has It Been, Where Is It Going?" a paper by Everett M. Rogers and James W. Dearing, Annenberg School of Communications, University of Southern California, January 5, 1987, page 52.)

Consideration is given in this model to influences that may be tangential to the agenda-setting process---such as interpersonal communication among policy elites and the personal experiences of

policy elites as well as the media's possible influence on policy planners. But on the whole the model portrays agenda-setting as largely a closed system with influence flowing in only one direction--- from the press to policy planners by way of the public.

Another way of describing the mechanisms of how public policy is made might be to visualize the media, the public, policy planners and other elites as partners in the business of policy formation and execution. According to this model, decisions on public policy can be considered a great dance of people and events through history. It is a procession in which the various participants are never equally matched at all times. Sometimes, one partner leads, at other times, another. Nor is it uncommon for partners to be changed in the middle of the dance. The media may wish to lead its public partner, but the policy planner might try to cut in on him. Or other parties, watching the proceedings from the corner of the dancefloor may march to its center and attempt to manipulate movement to their own satisfaction.

The point is that the formation of public policy is not a unidirectional but a multidirectional process, with the "dancefloor" a site of struggle among competing partners. According to this model, it is not a competition where influence flows in only one direction. Nor is it a process in which power relationships are forever fixed. Instead actors work reciprocally on one another, sometimes from a position of strength, sometimes from a position of weakness. (See Figure 2)

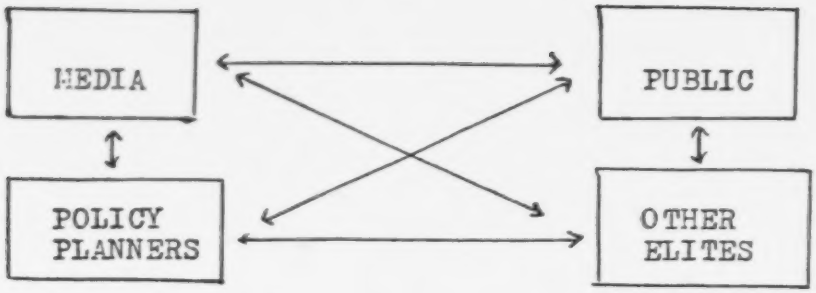

Figure 2. The Policy Planning Dancefloor.

Seen in this context, agenda-setting is a process where various actors intend to influence other actors, but are, as well, influenced in return. Who is influencing who at any moment in the process may be subject to change, as circumstances change. McLeod, Becker and Byrnes have found that whether the press is leading or following public opinion may depend on what point in the policy-making process is being examined.[3] Kern, Levering and Levering found that the press' role in building public consensus on policy depends to a large degree on how that policy is first presented to it. If policy planners appear uniform, or in general agreement, the press is likely to be favorable in its representation of that policy to the public. But when competing sources of equal legitimacy appear, the press is likely to highlight the differences and work against the building of a public consensus.[4]

The evolution of the Truman Administration's policy on Palestine in the six months before Israel declared its nation-state status provides an excellent opportunity to investigate the role of the press in agenda-setting. The period from November 29, 1947 through May 14, 1948 marks a time of growing debate inside and outside the

Truman Administration on the efficacy of supporting the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine in the face of rising Arab opposition. The first date marks the decision of the United Nations General Assembly to partition Palestine between its Jewish and Arab occupants. The latter date coincides with the formal ending of the British mandate over Palestine and the declaration of the independent Jewish state of Israel. Between those dates controversy raged over each twist and turn of American policy.

The sites of the struggle were many and ever shifting. (See Figure 3)

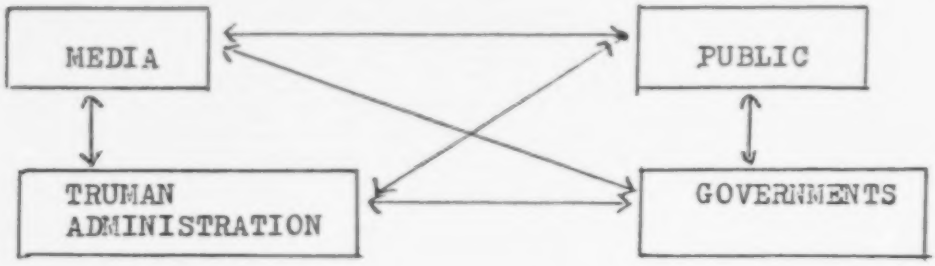

Figure 3. The Palestine Planning Dancefloor

In this diagram the Truman Administration consists of the President and White House staff, as well as the State Department, and its Near East Desk, the American Mission to the United Nations, and the Foreign Service and Defence communities, which includes the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Navy Secretary Forrestal.

"Governments" refer primarily to those most intensely interested in the Palestine question. That would include the British, the Jewish Agency, representing Jewish interests in Palestine, as well as the

governments of Saudi Arabia, Transjordan, Syria, Egypt, Lebanon and Iraq.

The "media" includes members of the working press, with whom Truman shared generally amicable relations, and especially the White House correspondents and wire service reporters and members of the elite press, located in the major cities of the East Coast. Their coverage of the debate on Palestine formed the primary thrust of press scrutiny. They were for instance the press that Truman and his staff regularly read; the papers that foreign governments and the Jewish Agency read.

Behind these reporters were editors and publishers generally antagonistic to Truman. He called their editorials part of the "sabotage press" because of their ongoing opposition to Administration policy. The term "media" also refers to columnists like Drew Pearson, Walter Winchell, the Alsops, Walter Lippmann and James Reston, men whose judgments Truman saw drawn from "ivory towers." The media also included network radio correspondents who covered the Truman White House. It was a medium Truman would increasingly use to get his message "directly to the people." Finally there was a Jewish press which enjoyed in 1947-1948 a wide circulation among the country's five million Jews.

There was not one but several "publics" who attempted to influence the Palestine policy. There was the Jewish population located primarily in major urban areas of the East Coast and Midwest. It

spoke not in one but several voices. In addition there was the voice of anti-Semitism which came not from one but several sources. Local and state governments, as well as the Congress of the United States all played their part. They attempted to influence both the Administration and the press, in hopes that the latter would bring pressure on the former. Democratic and Republican party leaders and candidates became embroiled in this growing debate, and even members of the country's courts, including its Supreme Court.

BACKGROUND. Examination of primary sources at the Harry S. Truman Library in Independence, Missouri as well as oral interviews given by many of the reporters who covered the Truman White House, along with analysis of Foreign Relations of the United States documents provides abundant evidence to suggest the press played an active and significant role in the formulation and articulation of the Palestine policy.

One of the reasons it was able to exert this influence is President Truman's attitude toward the press. There are at least three instances which reflect Truman's view that the press was a key player both in representing his policy to the American people and in its reflection of popular attitudes to the Administration. "We have established a going policy," Truman told reporters at his October 17, 1947 news conference. "You are a part of that policy. It is a bipartisan foreign policy of the United States of America, not the President's policy, or the policy of the Secretary of State.

It is the policy of this country, of the United States, and you are just as much in it as I am."[5]

Although publicly giving Truman the benefit of the doubt, the White House press corps was privately dubious about both the Presidential style and performance. Richard L. Strout of the Christian Science Monitor felt reporters "decried and minimized" the man because he had the "disadvantage of following a famous President."[6] The Associated Press' Jack Bell thought it was largely a question of style. Roosevelt had the finesse that Truman clearly lacked.[7] Robert Riggs of the Louisville Courier-Journal remembered being leary of the President's lack of experience and his "lack of self-control."[8]

Carleton Kent, the Washington correspondent for the Chicago Times, one of Truman's favorite papers, thought that even members of the President's own staff worried about Truman's ability to sell policy to the American people. Kent says the President's press aides wanted to go back to the written questions at press conferences that had been discontinued under Roosevelt. He believes it was because they were plainly worried about "Mr. Truman's ability to handle the open off-the-cuff question and answer session."[9]

There is evidence that those who managed the President's Middle East policy shared the press' concern over Truman's competence in foreign affairs. Loy Henderson, the President's point man on Palestine following his appointment as Director of Near Eastern and African

Affairs in mid-1945 wondered whether Truman "would be able to stand up with his limited international background."[10] Henderson, who had begun his career at the State Department more than a quarter century before, was frankly worried by what he saw as Truman's tilt towards the Jewish cause in Palestine. "Under pressure of the Zionist juggernaut," he complained, "the President, members of Congress, other leaders in American public life, the press and radio found themselves entangled in the problems of Palestine. The pressure on the Department of State was terrific, and my office unfortunately was one of the centers of the storm."[11]

So by the fall of 1947 the President's control over his Palestine policy and public confidence in that policy was far from settled. Not only the press, but power centers within the government itself, questioned the President's stated objective of bringing 100,000 Jewish refugees to Palestine if it meant a deepening American commitment to the troubled region. Poll data suggests there was considerable resistance to admitting more Jews to this country where residual anti-Semitism still considered them to have too great an influence. Most Americans seemed sympathetic to the problem of Jewish immigrants as long as they settled elsewhere and did so without risking American military intervention.[12]

Violence stemming from Jewish agitation for a Palestinian state and Arab opposition to such a state led the British on April 2, 1947 to formally ask the United Nations to consider the Palestine problem. On May 15, the General Assembly set up a special committee to

investigate the crisis.[13] Its failure to reach a unanimous recommendation led to the appointment of an ad hoc committee which met 34 times between September 25th and November 25th to consider competing proposals.[14] As it did the pressure on Truman and his Administration to support the majority report favoring partition of Palestine into a Jewish and Arab state was intense. Truman had never seen anything like it.[15]

On November 27th, Chaim Weizmann, the veteran Zionist leader who served as point man in Zionist communications to the White House, assured the President there was no truth in published reports the Jewish Agency was placing unreasonable pressure on delegations to support the majority report.[16] Two days later the vote came. The General Assembly passed the majority report and asked the Security Council to carry it out. The President and members of his staff were at the Army-Navy football game when the vote came. Assistant Press Secretary Eben Ayers observed it wasn't much of a contest. It was nothing like the one which was about to begin.[17]

FROM PARTITION TO TRUSTEESHIP: NOVEMBER 29, 1947---MARCH 19, 1948. This period was marked by what was perceived as a reversal in Administration support for partition and its adoption of a plan that would have placed Palestine under an open-ended trusteeship of the United Nations. It was a time in which various members of the Administration representing different points of view actively recruited the press for support of their positions. At the same

time, members of the press highlighted these differences, while serving as a framework within which the policy deliberations on Palestine went forward.

The press was used during this period as providing ammunition for the various power blocks then debating policy within the Administration. A good example is on December First, when at a White House meeting Navy Secretary Forrestal used an editorial appearing in the Sunday edition of the New York Times as his starting point in criticizing the UN vote. He told the President the decision to partition Palestine was "fraught with great danger for the future security of this country."[18] Forrestal remained troubled even after the President assured him American armed forces could not be used to implement the partition resolution. Forrestal wrote in his diary he didn't know what the President's reply would be if forces were asked by the Security Council.[19]

This period also saw some members of the press take an active part in support of the creation of a Jewish state. Perhaps the best example of this is Freda Kirchwey, the editor of The Nation. On December 5, she sent a letter to the President's Administrative Assistant on Minority Affairs, David K. Niles. The letter thanked Niles for his support in keeping the Palestine matter "moving in the right direction."[20] Subsequent correspondence sought to alert Niles and the President "of the British plot to destroy the

partition resolution and the State Department's backing of that effort."[21] Later she attempted to reach Truman aboard the USS Williamsburg by relaying through the Navy Department a message blasting State Department Undersecretary Robert A. Lovett. Kirchwey told the President Lovett had told "selected newspaper people" that the Administration was attempting to "revise" the partition resolution. "If Lovett's statement is correct," she bristled, "this represents a double cross."[22]

The press also served as an early warning system to groups intimately involved in the Palestine debate that the Administration might be backing away from support of partition. One of the times this occurred was on January 6, 1948 when Eliahu Epstein, the director of the Washington office of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, along with Abba Eban from the Jewish Agency met with Henderson and Dean Rusk, the director of the Office of Special Political Affairs, to discuss newspaper reports indicating the Administration was re-evaluating its policy. These reports, he claimed, had hardened Arab opposition. He demanded the Administration to arm Jewish militias "for their own defence."[23]

The press criticized what it considered the growing secrecy of the Truman Administration Palestine policy. On January 14th, Truman's press secretary Charlie Ross, received an advanced copy of an article by Look Magazine's Roscoe Drummond attacking the President's failure to use his weekly news conferences to make his foreign policy

understandable to the American people.[24] An example of the President's growing difficulties with the press occurred the following day. The Jewish Agency had advised the United Nations that an international police force would be necessary to put partition into effect. Truman was asked at his news conference whether that meant American troops would be sent to Palestine. He answered tersely that the U.S. continued to support the U.N. plan and that he believed "it was necessary for the U.N. to enforce its mandates."[25]

The President's failure to make a concerted effort at winning press support for his policy perhaps stemmed as much from his uncertainty over that policy as his lack of adeptness in press relations.[26] Its consequence was to create a vacuum in the agenda-setting process others, even his closest friends, were anxious to fill.

One example of this is the President's unique relationship with Eddie Jacobson, his old haberdashery partner from Kansas City. On January 29, Truman met in the Oval Office with Jacobson and Frank Goldman, president of the B'Nai Brith. Jacobson had arranged the meeting by sending Truman a copy of the January 15th edition of the Jewish National Monthly, published by B'Nai Brith. Jacobson drew the President's attention to the publication's editorial which stated Truman's efforts to establish a Jewish homeland would cause him to "go down in history as one of those responsible for righting an historic wrong" done to the Jewish people."[27]

It wasn't only the domestic press, but the foreign press as well,

that added rhetorical weight to the policy debate. On February 9 the U.S. representative in Jerusalem wired the Secretary of State that Palestine was "in a state of disintegration." He added that Haganah, the Israeli army, had just warned in Arabic-language broadcasts that "it had no quarrels with Arabs, but will give blow for blow." The Yishuv, Jews living in Palestine, were warned by the broadcast of "worse times to come." The Jewish Agency was asking for a 25,000 man militia.[28]

America's foreign service officers relied heavily on press reports in Palestine. The reports served as a kind of "intelligence" to changing conditions within the region and what the combatants were thinking, or wanted others to think they were thinking. The local reports had the effect of exacerbating the seige mentality sweeping the country while forming a framework within which the American Administration decided its next policy move. In turn, interest groups within Palestine, were influenced by what they were reading of events in Washington and New York. Rumors built on rumors as fear of all-out war mounted.

Consul General Macatee reported from Jerusalem in early February that reports appearing in the American press suggesting the U.N. "is by no means eager to come to this country" had created "widespread uneasiness" within Palestine's Jewish community. A Zionist leader had hurriedly been dispatched to the United States to investigate. Macatee reported that "news and editorial columns

of the Palestine Post and other Jewish newspapers here" suggested the Near East Division of the State Department was tilting American policy toward the Arabs. That is what Arabic newspapers were reporting as well.[29]

Monitoring the Arab press had convinced America's Middle East watchers the Arabs were in trouble. "Insistent demands for more men and more money often appear in the Arab press," one report noticed. "These demands are frequently coupled with the rhetorical question as to whether the Arabs of surrounding countries wish to see their Palestinian brethren go under."[30]

Various interest groups tried to directly mobilize public opinion by advertising their position in the American press. One example was on February 9th when full page ads were taken out in major cities throughout the country by the League for Peace with Justice in Palestine. It told readers: "The way to keep your son, husband or father out of war is by opposing Zionist political ambitions in Palestine." War was otherwise "inevitable" because "territorial aggression by a world-wide minority nationalist group" would "plunge" the United States into a war nobody but the Zionists wanted.[31]

The White House was well aware of the play Palestine was getting in the press. Truman made the reading of the Eastern press a daily ritual.[32] In addition, an aide to White House Counsel

Clark Clifford, George S. Elsey, kept a working file of all major articles on Palestine. He would underline in red some of the most savage press attacks on the White House handling of the deepening crisis. Truman's perceived reticence and that of his Secretary of State, George S. Marshall, only fanned the flames.[33]

Washington's official silence was by late February turning up the heat on the U.S. Mission to the United Nations. Porter McKeever, the chief of the office of public information at the U.S. mission complained to Rusk "that the press was taking a very critical view of the State Department and the mission was very much concerned about the relationship of the mission and the state department in the development of our policy in this matter."[34]

Rusk advised McKeever that there had been "strict orders" to clamp down. "Tell reporters we are waiting further instructions from the Department," he cautioned. "Be responsive to questions, but don't seek them out."[35]

But not everyone in the White House was comfortable with the drift of Truman's Palestine policy. It was leaked to the New York Times that the United States was reviewing its ban on arms to Palestine and might aid with its own men the U.N. force there. The February 18 article by James Reston was a trial balloon, since the whole thrust of American policy at this time was moving in the other direction.[36]

The press became the site of the growing national debate. One of its most prominent voices was former Undersecretary of State, Sumner Welles, who had left the State Department in 1943. Welles' running commentary on the Administration's Palestine policy appeared in the Washington Post and other major papers around the country. He considered the U.N.'s life to be at risk and blamed the Administration for it. Truman had failed to see, he argued, that the Arab states could not be permitted to defy the U.N. by their threats of force.[37]

Even false press reports served as a framework for Administration action. On February 19, for instance, a representative of the American Zionist Emergency Council beseiged Clifford on an article that had appeared in that morning's New York Herald Tribune. It reported that two warships heading from U.S. ports were bound for Saudi Arabia. After some checking Clifford directed Phileo Nash on the President's staff to call A.Z.E.C. back and put out the fire.[38]

The following day the President's political problems deepened. The Elsey file yields an analysis contained in newspapers concerning elections in the Bronx, where forces loyal to Henry Wallace, the Progressive candidate for President, had won at the polls.[39] The Times was reporting the efforts of New York's Democratic establishment to pressure the President into lifting his arms embargo and supporting a U.N. police force for Palestine or risk the loss of the Jewish vote in November elections.[40]

In a speech before the U.N. on February 24, U.S. Ambassador Warren R. Austin appeared to back away from U.S. support for partition. The press pursued Marshall for a clarification who gave none.[41] Arab governments were pleased by what they saw as Washington's new policy line. Egypt's Khashaba Pasha expressed his relief. His government had "feared official American attitude might be that which had circulated prominently in local press which favored partition."[42]

On March 8, Clifford told President Truman press reports of Austin's speech and its aftermath had "eroded public confidence" in both the U.N. and U.S. commitments in Palestine.[43] The following day Administration problems deepened. The New York Times reported that legal experts had determined the U.N. Security Council did have the authority to partition by Palestine by force. The Mission cabled Washington that this would only add to the "unfortunate public impression" that the U.S. and the U.N. were at odds over its powers.[44]

By mid-March press attacks on Truman escalated. The Alsops in the Post charged "there is no American policy on Palestine."[45] The Washington Star, Elsey duly noted, considered the policy hypocritical.[46] The Boston Sunday Herald said everyone in Washington was asking where the President "had been getting so much bad advice."[47]

Drew Pearson charged that Truman had been talking to a prominent New York publisher about Palestine and was "almost shouting. He said

the President pounded his desk and used words that can't be repeated about New York Jews. He said that New York Jews are disloyal to the country."[48]

Truman opened his press conference on March 11 by calling Pearson a "liar."[49] But Pearson, who had gotten the story from Ted Thackerey of the New York Evening Post, stood by his story.[50] The furor had barely subsided when a week later Austin made another speech at the U.N. and the press reported the wholesale "sellout" on partition in favor of a U.N. trusteeship over Palestine. Truman was shocked as well. He found out about it by reading it in the papers.

FROM TRUSTEESHIP TO PARTITION TO STATEHOOD: MARCH 20, 1948---MAY 14, 1948. Truman wrote on his March 19 calendar that the State Department reversal of his Palestine policy had made him look like "a liar and a doublecrosser."[51] He blamed "striped pants conspirators" at the State Department for pulling a policy switch while he and Marshall were out of town.[52] Internal evidence suggests the President had authorized the move but had given no specific date for its execution.[53]

The newspaper response was deafening. The New York Times alone carried ten separate stories on the U.S. action on March 20. One Congressman was quoted as calling it, "The most terrible sellout of the common people since Munich." Senator Robert Taft and Representative Emanuel Cellar considered it "shameful."[54]

Ayers wrote that telegrams began pouring in to the White House with the first press reports "charging the President with betrayal and worse."[55] At the morning staff meeting the President seemed "shocked and depressed." Ayers added, "The political effect may be terrificly bad."[56]

A reporter told Ayers, Rusk was planning to hold a background briefing with reporters at State at 11:30. Ayers had Presidential aide Matthew Connelly put a stop to it. An afternoon meeting among Ross and Ayers, Clifford and Connelly and Rusk drafted a statement Marshall made that evening in Los Angeles.[57] Marshall told reporters trusteeship was only "temporary" and would lead to partition "once a peaceful solution had been found."[58]

But the press attacks continued. The Administration was attacked for its lack of candor.[59] The President became an object of humorous ridicule. The Washington Times-Herald quoted the Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, North Carolina's Robert "Muley" Doughton as saying, "Just as the Republicans were getting set to kill him off next November, up comes Truman and commits suicide on them."[60]

Leaks were now popping up faster than the Truman Administration and its press office could plug them. At a morning briefing on the 22nd Ross categorically denied reports Clifford was about to bolt the Administration over Palestine.[61] General Marshall's secret testimony before an executive session of the Foreign Relations Committee became

front page news in the New York Times the following day.[62] Marshall privately brooded the Administration was suffering what it most sought to avoid---"a political blast from the press."[63] Macatee advised him Jews in Palestine "now felt betrayed in the interest of Middle Eastern oil." Correspondents in Jerusalem were telling Macatee the Jews "would set up their state in any event." The commander of the Arab armies in Palestine was telling them he would fight partition and "crush Zionism."[64]

The President had set March 25th as his next news conference. The day before he presided over a meeting of his key advisers on Palestine. Marshall reported there was a "good possibility" a truce might be negotiated. He was asked if it might be reached in time for the President's news conference but reported it would take at least a week more.[65]

The next day 172 "hungry" reporters filed into the President's Oval Office. It was the largest gathering Ayers had ever seen.[66] The President argued that obtaining a truce, prior to trusteeship, seemed the only way of avoiding "the slaughter of a lot of people."[67] But Time called it a "comic opera performance" and Welles charged in the Post that Truman lacked "moral leadership."[68]

Some within the Administration wanted a concerted effort to win media support for the President's policy.[69] Overseas missions were reporting difficulty in understanding what the policy was.[70] At home

the press office was putting out one fire after another. On March 31 Ross received a call from Tom Twitty of the New York Herald Tribune saying he had information the switch in Administration policy resulted from Secretary Marshall's "double-cross" of the President. Ross told him he wouldn't touch the story with a ten-foot pole, and it was scuttled.[71]

During the first half of April the press continued to push the Administration for a clarification of its position. The British announcement on April 21 that they would quit Palestine by May 15 was followed by Truman's pledge at a press conference the next day to furnish "our share" of a U.N. peacekeeping force in Palestine.[72] The Associated Press reported the President was considering asking Congress to remove any legal barriers to using troops in Palestine. But Press Secretary Ross refused to comment on it. A reporter asked Ross at their daily briefing whether it required Congressional authority or not. Ross wearily said, "I have no comment on that point whatsoever. I have heard something new about Palestine every day."[73]

Henderson didn't feel the denials went far enough. He took the lead of those within the Administration who wanted a more active campaign in dealing with the press. He told Lovett it should begin with the President announcing "he is going to devote a major portion of his time and energy to the Palestine problem." That would be followed with a highly publicized conference with Congressional leaders and

leaders of the Jewish community to "mobilize their support." It was crucial for the Administration to abandon its "defensive attitude and take the offensive." This could only be done by making "every effort...to explain through the press...radio...public addresses, etc., our position to the American people and to gain public support."[74]

But events were to overtake the Administration in the next three weeks, forcing another re-evaluation of its policy. It began on April 22nd when the State Department learned from press reports carried in Jerusalem that a Jewish state would come into being at the end of the British mandatory period.[75] The following day the Department considered a New York Times article which claimed the British had shown a new "flexibility" in staying in Palestine after the mandate lapsed. The British papers picked up the story. They claimed on the morning of April 23rd the American Ambassador was "putting pressure" on His Majesty's Government to stay. He angrily cabled Washington, charging such stories, which he believed "emanated from Washington" complicated his mission.[76]

By month's end Marshall told the British he was "concerned" about published reports they were supporting King Abdallah and his plans to strike at Palestine with armed forces out of Transjordan.[77] The British denied the reports.[78] Marshall tried to sound upbeat. He told reporters, off the record, on the 30th, that a truce had virtually been worked out between the Jewish Agency and the Arab League. The assertion appeared in print the following day and brought immediate

denials from Agency representative Moshe Shertok who charged Marshall "seriously misunderstood" the state of negotiations.[79] Later in the day the Arab League representative released a statement. Its forces would protect the holy shrines in Jerusalem from "Zionist aggression."[80] It seemed as though all parties were doing their negotiating in the press.

On the 4th, Clifford urged President Truman to recognize the "inevitable" and recognize the Jewish state. The U.S. must do it eventually, he said, so why not now, thereby beating the Russians.[81] But at his May 6th the President would only say his Administration was seeking a "peaceful settlement" to the crisis.[82]

In the last week of the crisis, the media served as a way of informing members within the Administration of what other members were doing on Palestine. On the 11th, Philip C. Jessup, the Deputy U.S. Representative on the Security Council in New York phoned Rusk in Washington. Had he seen the newspaper stories that morning suggesting the United States and the Soviet Union had agreed to settle their differences over Palestine? Rusk said that he had, and there may have been something to it. Jessup said, "If we now make a switch over to the side the Russians have been defending (immediate partition into Jewish and Arab states)...it would undermine" the U.S. position.[83]

Press reports were becoming a primary source of agitation for those within the Administration who had fought for trusteeship. A Special Assistant to Secretary Marshall had interrupted a cabinet meeting at the White House in which the Palestine crisis was being discussed to ask whether a United Press story was true. The report from Tel Aviv suggested Shertok had a personal message from Marshall he was delivering to David Ben-Gurion, the chairman of the Executive of the Jewish Agency, and the man the press was saying would be Israel's first prime minister. Marshall said he'd sent no such message and had never even heard of Ben-Gurion.[84]

To the end, the Administration appeared more controlled by events than in control of them. At his press conference on May 13, President Truman was asked if his government was going to recognize the new Jewish state. The President only said he would "cross that bridge when we come to it."[85]

On the 14th, as the British High Commissioner released a statement to the press in Haifa before boarding a British cruiser to Malta, other reporters were filing stories of the conflict about to begin. Syrian and Lebanese forces were marching on Palestine from the north. The Syrians would attack from Samakh it appeared; the Iraqis from Jisr Majani; the Arab Legion out of Hebron, Ramallah and Nablus.[86]

At twelve minutes past six on the evening of May 14, what few

reporters were still on duty, were called to report to the White House briefing room. There press secretary Charlie Ross read to them the following statement: "This government has been informed that a Jewish state has been proclaimed in Palestine, and recognition has been requested by the Provisional Government thereof. The United States recognizes the provisional government as the de facto authority of the new State of Israel."[87]

CONCLUSION. The purpose of this paper has been to examine the agenda-setting capacity of the press in the context of the Truman Administration and its deliberations over Palestine. The intention of the author has been to keep in mind the warning of Henri-Irenee Marrou who stated, "Our comprehension of a doctrine will be all the more authentic and the more profound to the extent that we grasp it better within the structure of its own reality." Marrou cautions that while the researcher has the right to abstract an explanation from a series of facts he must be cautious that this "surgical operation" does not do violence to the "fine points" and "delicate nuances" where the "truth resides."[88]

The "truth" in the matter of the Administration's Palestine policy appears to reside in a complex of factors. While there is evidence to suggest the press provided an important framework within which the public and private discourse on Palestine went forward, it was not the only framework. And while the press served as a site of struggle for various competitors in the agenda-setting process,

it was not the only such site. The policy dancefloor was filled with people and events that operated far outside the ability of any single institution to easily control.

Events overtook both the press and the Administration in the sense that they could not be easily organized into a policy which commanded continuing consensus within either the Administration, the media or the public. Part of the reason for this is that events taking place in Palestine were part of a long historical process which operated outside of any administration's or press corps' ability to control them.

There were internal contradictions in the evolution of the Administration's policy on Palestine that complicated its efforts at achieving a public consensus for its policies. There were competing approaches within the White House and its State Department with the press serving as an important site in which the struggle was played out in hopes of generating public support. But as Kern, Levering and Levering have shown, when competing sources of equal legitimacy appear, the agenda-setting capacity of the Administration is greatly reduced. The press is likely to highlight the differences and complicate the work of building a public consensus. This appears to have happened in the case of Palestine.

What this analysis disputes is that the process of policy agenda-setting is unidirectional, with influences flowing from the media

to the public to the policy agenda of decision-makers. Policy implementation in the Palestine case appears to have been influenced by additional factors---with the media acting on policy planners and being influenced in return. Similiar reciprocity appears in the media's relationship to the other partners on the policy planning dancefloor and in their influence upon one another.

The press, the public and political leaders are all imbedded in a complicated social structure in which they are mutually dependent. Like a set of muscles, force exerted within this structure along one axis always results in an opposing pressure directed towards another. In the case of Palestine, the Administration had hoped to influence the public agenda through the press, but found it could not completely resist the pressure the press brought to it. The press similiarly attempted to exert influence over policy considerations but discovered the pace of events bore in upon it.

Seen in this way, the great dance to form policy operates in a complex environment that has within it forces of mutual attraction and resistance. Which partner is leading on the dancefloor in any moment is subject to change. It will depend as much on each's familiarity with the score as the clarity of its conducting. In the case of Palestine, where Administration policy leadership was disunited and hesitant, the press played an increasingly important role in highlighting alternative policies from which the public could choose. In the end, policy helped to shape events of which it was a part, even as it was overtaken by events outside its control.

Footnotes

1. Bernard C. Cohen, The Press and Foreign Policy (Princeton: 1963), p. 13. Cohen observes that the press "may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about." As in Walter Lippmann's Public Opinion (1922), Cohen emphasizes the map-making function of the press.

Cohen analyzes the consequences for the policy making environment of the way the press defines and performs its job. He sees the press functioning as observer, participant and catalyst. Through it international news is brought to the American people in a flow of events until the attention of the journalist is captured elsewhere. The result is an apparent random pattern of coverage.

Once focused, however, an issue is likely to remain in the press, even when there is little new to report on it. Cohen sees the press as a leading channel through which foreign policy officers can tap an informed and articulate segment of public opinion. It is also one way in which the Administration keeps track of the changes in perceptions of some of its most relevant audiences. There is therefore a great incentive for policy-makers to turn to the press to make sure they know what is, and what is about to become important.

2. Everett M. Rogers and James W. Dearing, "Agenda-Setting Research: Where Has It Been, Where Is It Going?" a draft chapter in James A. Anderson (ed.), Communication Yearbook (Beverly Hills: In Press).

Since Cohen's 1963 study, the authors divide agenda-setting research into public and policy sections. The first focuses on the process through which the mass media communicate the relative importance of various issues and events to the public. This is an approach mainly pursued by mass communication researchers. The second grouping focuses on the process through which the policy agenda of political elites are influenced by a variety of factors, including media agendas and public agendas. This research has been mainly the domain of political scientists.

The authors see the 1972 study by McCombs and Shaw ("The Agenda-Setting Function of the Mass Media," Public Opinion Quarterly, 36: 176-184) as initiating a school of similiar studies analyzing the setting of the public agenda. The authors see Cohen's studies in 1965, 1967, 1970 and 1973 as giving rise to a series of studies analyzing how the policy agenda of elites is set.

3. See Jack M. McLeod, Lee B. Becker and James E. Byrnes (1974), "Another Look at the Agenda-Setting Function of the Press," Communication Research, 1:131-166.

4. Montague Kern, Particia W. Levering and Ralph B. Levering, The Kennedy Crises: The Press, The Presidency and Foreign Policy (Chapel Hill: 1984). The authors suggest that a highly visible press strategy alone didn't benefit the President until his policy

Footnotes (contd.)

more closely reflected the media's attitude. Press coverage, they found, effectively challenged the "official" view of policy-makers only when sharp differences were apparent between the Administration, the Congress and the public. In those instances the press served to magnify those differences. They concluded the President exerted a strong influence on the press during a fast-breaking crisis, but not when competing interpretations of events were available from sources the press considered equally legitimate.

5. Papers of Harry S. Truman: Press Secretary Files. Presidential Press Conferences. Transcriptions. 1945-1947. Box 62. Also, a similiar statement is to be found in Truman's remarks before the Radio News Editors Group on November 13, 1947, available in Papers of Harry S. Truman. White House Official Reporter. Working Papers. January 1947-June 1948. Box 30. That collection also contains a similiar statement given on April 17, 1948 before the American Society of Newspaper Editors. The sense of it is clearly restated in Truman's Memoirs, Vol. 1, p. 47.

6. Oral History Interview: Richard L. Strout, pp. 1-2. Also see Louis Liebovich, "Failed White House Press Relations in the Early Months of the Truman Administration," a paper delivered at the Midwestern Journalism Historians Convention, in Urbana, Illinois on April 10, 1987.

7. Oral History Interview: Jack L. Bell, p. 37.

8. Oral History Interview: Robert L. Riggs, pp. 13-15.

9. Oral History Interview: Carleton Kent, pp. 10-13.

10. Oral History Interview: Loy W. Henderson, pp. 34-35.

11. Ibid., pp. 104-105. For an understanding of how the State Department's Near East Division came to see the Middle East its own policy-making domain see Phillip J. Baram, The Department of State in the Middle East (College Station: 1978). For an understanding of the elitist attitudes of the department more generally see Robert D. Schulzinger, The Making of the Diplomatic Mind: The Training, Outlook and Style of U.S. Foreign Service Officers, 1908-1931 (Middletown: 1975).

12. Charles Herbert Stember, Jews in the Mind of America (New York: 1966). See poll data results on pages 8-13, 50, 55, 60-61, 77-92 and 101-128. Particularly interesting is his chapter 6, poll findings among Americans concerning the holocaust and chapter 8, the impact of Israel on American attitudes.

In a 1944 poll Jews were found to be the least desireable of all immigrant groups with the exception of citizens from Germany and Japan. In 1948, 60 percent of all respondents agreed a specific limitation should be put on the number of Jewish refugees to be admitted to the United States---a percentage even higher than those who wished to see a limit applied to German immigrants.

Footnotes (contd.)

When asked during the war which groups had more to say about running this country than they should only four percent spontaneously named Jews. When asked directly, do Jews have too much power and influence, 67 percent said yes. Stember, pp. 174-180, shows that the majority of Americans claimed to follow the events in Palestine and seemed to be aware of major developments in the region as early as December 1945. By February 1946, nearly three in four respondents were telling University of Chicago researchers they had read or heard something about the establishment of a Jewish state or Jewish homeland in Palestine.

By the end of 1946, more than four in five Americans were aware of the trouble in Palestine. (Stember, p. 174) Nearly two in three wanted the United States to keep out of the responsibility of keeping order in Palestine and three-quarters specifically disapproved of sending troops there. (Stember, p. 177)

13. See United Nations, Official Records of the 1st Special Session of the General Assembly: Plenary Meetings of the General Assembly, 1947, I, p. 183.

14. UN, Yearbook of the UN (1947-1948). Report of the UN Special Committee on Palestine, pp. 227-231.

15. Papers of Harry S. Truman. Official File. 204 Misc. April 1947-January 1948. Box 773. Folder 6. Also, Truman, Memoirs, II, p. 158.

16. Memoirs, II, p. 158. But a letter from Joseph M. Proskauer, president of the American Jewish Committee, dated November 27, 1947, and appearing in 204 Misc. file disputes Weizmann.

17. Ayers Diaries. Folder 4. Page 188.

18. Walter Millis, ed. The Forrestal Diaries (New York: 1951), p. 344. The editorial stated: "Many of us have long had doubts...concerning the wisdom of erecting a political state on the basis of a religious faith."

19. Ibid., p. 346.

20. Papers of David K. Niles. Israel File. July 1946-December 1948. Box 30. Folder 2. The President acknowledged receipt of the article in a letter under the signature of Charles Ross.

21. Ibid. In a separate letter to Truman, Kirchwey detailed the "active help" the Middle East Division of the State Department was giving the British in "sabotaging" the President's own policy. "What I am afraid of," she wrote, "is that the British will accelerate (Arab opposition) and face the Security Council with a fait accompli. I beg you to help prevent this."

22. Official File. 204 Misc. Box 774. Folder 2. Kirchwey ends her cable by telling Truman: "Do not believe that you could be party to

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such action." What she didn't know was that William Hopkins, the acting clerk at the White House, decided not to relay the message.

23. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1948, V, pp. 537-538.

24. Papers of Charles G. Ross. Correspondence File. Box 2. Members of the White House press corps were generally critical of Truman's use of the press conference. Bell didn't find him very skillful fielding questions. Oral Interview, p. 36. Charles J. Greene of the New York Daily News had the same impression. Oral Interview, pp. 6-7. Carroll H. Kenworthy of United Press didn't feel Truman used the press conference as a tool to communicate policy as Roosevelt had. Oral Interview, pp. 12-15. Riggs thought the President was sometimes out of control at press conferences. Oral Interview, pp. 14-15. Raymond P. Brandt of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch believed Truman made his mistakes by being so brief his statements were subject to misinterpretation. Oral Interview, pp. 25-29.

Ross and Ayers were both subject to considerable criticism in the oral interviews. Ross was criticised for not knowing what reporters working on strict deadlines really needed out of the White House. Ayers was criticised for his lack of access to the President. Both were seen as overly cautious.

25. Press Secretary File. Box 63. Press conference no. 133.

26. See Liebovich, passim.

27. Official File. 204 Misc. Folder 6.

28. FRUS, 1948, V, pp. 607-608.

29. Ibid., p. 609.

30. Ibid., p. 611.

31. George Elsey Papers. Foreign Relations: Palestine. Box 60.

32. Ibid. Also, Press Conference File. Transcripts. Box 62. At his 124th press conference on October 17, 1947 Truman described how he followed the daily press. "I take the papers themselves, and I read at least a dozen daily papers every day," he said. He mentioned that he read all the Washington and New York papers, as well as the Baltimore Sun, the Philadelphia Bulletin, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, the Kansas City Star, the Chicago Times and Sun as well as the Pittsburgh papers. "I read them because I like to read them," he told reporters, "and I find out lots of things about myself I never heard of."

33. Press Secretary Files. Transcripts. Box 63. On February 11, Marshall was asked by the press if the U.S. position on Palestine had changed or was in the process of changing. He told them it had not. Asked if the U.S. representative to the U.N. would be asked to reiterate that position

Footnotes (contd.)

Marshall said he would not. (FRUS, 1948, V, pp. 625-626). Asked at his news conference the following day, the President said he had no comment on any aspect of the Palestine question. Asked if he was disposed to soften his stand, he replied, "The United States government is supporting the U.N. That is as far as I can go." (Press Secretary Files. Transcripts. Box 63).

34. FRUS, 1948, V, pp. 626-627.

35. Ibid., p. 627. On the 13th, both the New York Herald-Tribune and the New York Times noted Marshall's sudden "silence" and speculated that a policy review was underway.

36. Elsey Papers. Foreign Relations: Palestine. Box 60.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid.

41. FRUS, 1948, V, pp. 665-666. See also Henderson Oral Interview, p. 130.

42. FRUS, 1948, V, p. 677.

43. Ibid., pp. 690-695. Clifford argued that the Austin speech was "in direct contradiction to the President's (long) stated policy." He added, "The American people see their government failing to back up the U.N. position on Palestine. This is causing a complete lack of confidence in our foreign policy. There is a definite feeling that we have no foreign policy, that we do not know where we are going, that the President and State Department are bewildered, and that the United States instead of furnishing leadership in the world, is drifting helplessly."

Clifford warned the U.S. had "crossed the Rubicon." It meant that with Austin's speech the U.S. now appeared "in the ridiculous role of trembling before threats of a few nomadic desert tribes. This has done us irreparable damage. Why should Russia or Yugoslavia, or any other nation treat us with anything other than contempt in light of our shill-shallying appeasement of the Arabs."

44. Ibid., p. 701. Rusk added that the U.S. Mission at the United Nations would soon see press accounts "quoting a Russian spokesman to the effect that the Soviet Union will advocate that the Security Council implement by force if necessary the partition plan." That Russian spokesman was the Soviet U.N. delegate Andrei Gromyko.

Gromyko was adept at playing the American press in the controversy

Footnotes (contd.)

over Palestine. Like the United States, the Soviet Union had supported the November 29 majority report recommending partition, but unlike the United States, the Soviet position never wavered. As permanent members of the Security Council both countries were involved in meetings during the middle weeks of March with the primary actors in the conflict. Throughout this period they had American officials on the defensive, and they accomplished this in large part through the press.

On March 9, for instance, Gromyko told the press, even before the meetings started, that the U.N. should carry out partition. The following day Austin was forced to respond in the press, and said, the Soviets were "prejudging the case" in rushing to an act "without precedent." (Elsey Papers. Foreign Relations: Palestine. Box 60).

Two days later Gromyko attacked U.N. Secretary General Trygve Lie for telling the press the Soviets were refusing to meet with representatives of the Jewish Agency. Gromyko said his government only refused to hold consultations with representatives of the Jewish Agency in the absence of other delegations. (FRUS, 1948, V, p. 718).

The following day Austin reported Gromyko as asking the British Ambassador Sir Alexander Cadogan if "press information was accurate" concerning thousands of troops now pouring into Palestine from other countries. If it was, he demanded to know what was being done to stop it. (FRUS, 1948, V, p. 722).

By the end of the week Rusk's aide, Robert McClintock, admitted the Russians were winning the propaganda war, even in the American press. He told Rusk: "On the basis of John Rogers' account in this morning's Herald Tribune we have come mighty close to the Gromyko line of favoring an out and out finding by the Security Council that the Arab States had been guilty of a threat to international peace and security in and around Palestine." (FRUS, 1948, V, p. 730).

45. Elsey Papers. Foreign Relations: Palestine. Box 60.

46. Ibid.

47. David Niles Papers. Israel File. Box 30. Folder 3.

48. Ayers Diaries. Box 16. Folder 5. pp. 38-39. Also, Margaret Truman, Harry S. Truman (New York: 1973), p. 386.

49. Presidential Secretary Files. Transcripts. Box 63. Also, Ayers Diaries. Box 16. Folder 5. pp. 38-39. Also, M. Truman, p. 386.

50. Ayers Diaries. Box 16. Folder 5. pp. 38-39.

51. M. Truman, p. 388.

52. Ibid., p. 389.

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53. FRUS, 1948, V, p. 750.

54. Elsey Papers. Foreign Relations: Palestine. Box 60.

55. Ayers Diaries. Box 16. Folder 5.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid.

58. FRUS, 1948, V, p. 749.

59. Wall Street Journal. February 26, 1948. Also, Elsey Papers. Foreign Relations: Palestine. Box 60.

"Truman wants and needs the Jewish vote," the Journal reported, "yet he knows it would be political suicide to get American troops into a shooting fray in Palestine. Hence our shifting policies have been aimed at getting the one without the other. In the vernacular, the Administration wants to have its cake and eat it too."

On the same date Elsey noted Marcus Childs' column in the Washington Post. It described the Administration's Palestine policy as a "revolving, perpetuating mistake. It can be attacked from any angle." Childs criticized the President for a lack of candor. The Post had editorially condluded that trusteeship would require more troops than if the U.S. had simply stuck with its partition plan.

The New York Times quoted Administration supporters as saying they hoped the President would have some explanation for his about-face.

60. Niles Papers. Israel File. Box 30. Folder 3.

61. Ayers Diaries. Box 16. Folder 5.

62. New York Times. March 25, 1948. Also, FRUS, 1948, V, p. 753.

63. FRUS, 1948, V, p. 750.

64. Ibid., p. 753.

65. Ibid., p. 754. Also, Papers of Eben A. Ayers. General File. Palestine.

66. Ayers Diaries. Box 16. Folder 5. Also, George Elsey Oral Interview, p. 77.

Elsey describes how Ross and Truman would work together to get the President ready for his news conferences: "Ross had a habit of asking the President in a sharp, sometimes rude fashion, blunt and unpleasant questions and the President was sometimes flair back or snap out a quick answer, not always in diplomatic terms, nor would

it be very politically wise, at which point Charlie would lean back and laugh and the President would also grin, and realize that all Ross had been doing was simply putting him on the alert to the fact that that was the kind of question he might get from an unfriendly reporter who was trying to get from him precisely that reaction Ross had succeeded in getting."

The President, in this instance, read from a statement prepared by Clifford and added little to it in followup questioning from reporters. "Partition could not be carried out by peaceful means," the President told reporters. "And we could not undertake to impose this solution on the people of Palestine by the use of American troops. Unless emergency action is taken there will be no public authority in Palestine... capable of preserving law and order. Violence and bloodshed will descend on the Holy Land. Large scale fighting will be the inevitable result." He concluded: "Trusteeship is not proposed as a substitute for the partition plan but as an effort to fill the vacuum soon to be created."

67. Presidential Secretary Files. Transcriptions. Box 63.

68. Elsey Papers. Foreign Relations. Palestine. Box 60. Also, Niles Papers. Israel File. Box 30. Folder 3.

69. FRUS, 1948, V, p. 757. See also Henderson Oral Interview, pp. 117-119, where he expresses admiration for the organization and tenacity of the Zionists, a zeal, he believed, the Administration would be well-served in copying.

Henderson told Marshall: "Internally we should take the lead in calling upon all American citizens regardless of race, creed or political party to refrain from any action which might encourage the continuance of violence in Palestine. It is possible that a carefully planned campaign might result in freeing many American Jews from the domination of Zionist extremists."

But the White House press office worked to annul Henderson's influence. Ayers wrote in his diary on the 25th that he and Ross had been "suspicious" of Henderson for some time. He was nothing but an "Anglophile." He noted "there were indications" Henderson's stay at State "might not be long." (Ayers Diaries. Box 16. Folder 5.)

Others at the White House saw the case the same way. Presidential aide Matthew Connelly told a gathering of State Department career officers that they were "more aware of British policy than in getting support for the American policy." (Ayers Diaries. Box 16. Folder 5.)

70. FRUS, 1948, V, p. 764.

71. Ayers Diaries. Box 16. Folder 5. Page 61.

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72. Presidential Secretary Files. Transcriptions. Box 63.

73. Papers of Eben A. Ayers. Press and Radio Conferences. Charles G. Ross and Eben A. Ayers. May 1947---September 1949. Box 14. Also, FRUS, 1948, V, p. 842.

74. FRUS, 1948, V, pp. 840-842.

75. Ibid., p. 842.

76. Ibid., pp. 853-856.

77. Ibid., p. 865. Truman obviously approved of the document. His initials are on the cable sent over Marshall's signature.

78. Ibid., p. 866.

79. Niles Papers. Israel File. Box 30. Folder 2.

80. FRUS, 1948, V, p. 879.

81. Ibid., pp. 898-906.

82. Presidential Secretary Files. Transcripts. Box 63.

83. FRUS, 1948, V, pp. 965-969.

84. Ibid., pp. 972-974.

85. Presidential Secretary Files. Transcriptions. Box 63.

86. Ibid., pp. 990-992.

87. Ayers Diaries. Box 16. Folder 5.

88. Henri-Irenee Marrou, The Meaning of History (Baltimore/Dublin: 1959, 1966), pp. 270-271.